

FLW Army expert receives national recognition for fighting sex crimes

Colby Hauser/CID Public Affairs

Posted: Tuesday, January 17, 2012 11:59 pm

QUANTICO, Va. (Jan. 17, 2012) — A military professional from the U.S. Army Law Enforcement community will be recognized in a big way this April for his significant contributions in combating sexual assault and violence against women.

Russell Strand, a retired U.S. Army CID Special Agent and the current Chief of the Family Advocacy Law Enforcement Training Division at the U.S Army Military Police School (USAMPS), has been selected by the End Violence Against Women (EVAW) International Board of Directors to receive the 2012 Visionary Award.



Russell Strand

The End Violence Against Women International organization has a tremendous reputation for its work with multidisciplinary organizations around the world to protect women from all forms of violence including sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking and Strand said he is “tremendously honored and humbled to be selected for the 2012 Visionary Award.”

EVAW International’s mission is to educate those who respond to gender-based violence, and equip them with knowledge and tools needed to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable. The Visionary Award is designed to recognize individuals for their vision and leadership in ending violence against women. It is given to an individual who has advanced the field through research or practice, which has increased public awareness of the problem of violence against women and improved the response of criminal justice and community systems.

“Russ and the DoD have done an incredible amount of work in a short amount of time combating sexual assault and violence against women,” said Joanne Archambault, the Executive Director of EVAW International and a 23 year veteran of the San Diego Police Department. “We have never seen that kind of change in a civilian community and I just wish more people would recognize that fact.”

The first recipient of the Visionary Award was the Vice President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden, for his 1994 Violence Against Women Act. This landmark legislation provided \$1.6 billion to enhance the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes committed against women and has been heralded by the National Association of Women (NOW) as “the greatest breakthrough in civil rights for women in nearly two decades.”

“This is an extremely important recognition by a tremendously well-respected international organization,” Strand said. “This award is not only exceptionally rewarding for me personally, but also a major recognition for the Army’s MP School, Army CID (Criminal Investigation Command), and military law enforcement as a whole.”

Strand said that what makes his recognition exciting is in large part the impact the military is having on ending violence against women, specifically in the areas of sexual assault and the resulting criminal investigations.

“It takes an incredible amount of courage for a victim of a sexual assault to come forward,”

Archambault said. "So what we do and what Russ does is to improve the criminal justice response to ensure that when a victim does come forward they receive an appropriate response."

Archambault said that the number one area where law enforcement fails is victim interviewing.

"Too often, investigators focus on the victim instead of the subject of the investigation," she said. "But Russ has developed a new program that is outstanding in the field of both victim and subject interviewing."

The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interviews (FETI) is a new technique being employed by Army CID Special Agents and other criminal investigators trained by Strand, and has already been proven to be a "game changer" in the investigation and prosecution of many child abuse and sexual abuse cases.

Strand explained that trauma victims undergo a process that many professionals and victims do not commonly understand. He stated that most people, both inside and outside law enforcement, have been trained to believe that when an individual experiences a trauma event, the cognitive brain records the vast majority of the event including the "who, what, where, why, when and how," as well as other peripheral information.

"When the criminal justice system responds to the report of a crime, most professionals are trained to obtain this type of information," he added. However, this is not necessarily so for the victim.

Strand explained that trauma victims do not experience a traumatic event in the same way one typically experiences a non-traumatic event. He said that the body and brain react to and record information about a traumatic event in an entirely different way than law enforcement professionals may perceive.

"When trauma occurs, the cognitive brain frequently 'shuts down,' leaving the more primitive brainstem to experience and record the event," Strand explained. "While brainstems are generally very good at recording experiential and sensory information, they do not do very well at recording the type of information law enforcement professionals have been trained to obtain i.e., the 'who, what, when, where, why, and how.'"

He said that use of the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview technique in domestic violence cases is also emerging as an extremely promising strategy for increasing successful interventions, investigations and prosecutions. The FETI technique draws on the best practices of child forensic interviews, critical incident stress management, and motivational interview techniques that combine them into a simple, three-pronged approach; unlocking the trauma experience in a way that can be better understood.

Strand is no stranger to the war against sexual assault. As a recognized Department of Defense and international subject matter expert in the field of domestic violence intervention, critical incident peer support, sexual assault, trafficking in persons and child abuse investigations, he brings to the fight more than 36 years of law enforcement, investigative, and consultation experience.

Having established, developed, produced, and conducted the U.S. Army Domestic Violence Intervention Training and Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Techniques courses currently used by the Department of the Army to train CID Special Agents, he also supervised the development of the Critical Incident Peer Support course.

Strand also developed and implemented the DoD Special Victims Unit (SVU) course and responded to the mass shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, to provide critical incident and trauma victim interview support.

On November 5, 2009, 13 people were killed and 29 wounded in what was the worst mass shooting to ever take place at an Army installation.

Army CID aggressively confronts sexual assault within the Army, having brought on board Highly Qualified Experts (HQEs) that have distinguished themselves as prosecutors, investigators and forensic scientists in the civilian sector. Army CID has also deployed special sexual assault investigators to more than 17 major Army installations in Germany, Korea and throughout the United States.

Complementing this initiative, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory, the Department of Defense's only major crime lab, added robotics and automation enhancements for DNA forensic work, and a new Laboratory Information Management System, which increases the capabilities of the examiners yielding quicker response times to evidence processing. The lab also hired 32 additional forensic examiners and specialists to handle the increased workload from the SVUs.

“Russ is highly regarded within the community and is a handful of these professionals that continually does outstanding work,” Archambault said. “So selecting him and what he has contributed was easy.”

The End Violence Against Women International 2012 Visionary Award will be presented to Strand during the EVAW National Conference in San Diego, Calif., on April 2, 2012.

“EVAW International has been a true pioneer in the development and research of innovative new policies and techniques,” Strand said. “As the first military professional to receive this award, this recognition also supports phase four of the Army Sexual Assault Campaign plan of ‘Lead the Nation.’”